

Annual Report

Northern Alberta Development Council

1991-92







TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

208 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6 403/427-2080

His Honour
The Honourable Gordon Towers
Lieutenant-Governor of the
Province of Alberta

Sir:

The undersigned has the honour to transmit herewith, the twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Al 'Boomer' Adair".

Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair
Minister Responsible for
Northern Development





Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair
Minister Responsible for the
Northern Alberta Development Council

Sir:

The undersigned has the honour to transmit herewith, the twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bob Elliott".

Bob Elliott, MLA
Grande Prairie
Chairman



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Statement of the Chairman

Bob Elliott, MLA
Chairman
Northern Alberta Development Council

During the 1991-92 fiscal year, the Northern Alberta Development Council continued its leadership in providing Albertans with information on what the north has to offer. Council published updated versions of **Opportunities for Health Care Professionals in Northern Alberta, Profiles of Regions and Communities in Northern Alberta**, and **Inventory of Infrastructure for Northern Alberta Communities**.

Responding to a call from northern tourism operators, Council sponsored the Tourism North 91 Seminar, held in May in Slave Lake. Delegates to the seminar learned that a concerted effort to identify and market the tourist attractions of the north was needed.

Keeping the provincial government and its departments abreast of northern concerns is one of Council's main functions, and 1991-92 saw Council articulating northern needs and development priorities to various levels of government. The Students Finance Board, Family and Community Support Services, and provincial cabinet members all received sets of topic-specific policy recommendations from the Council based on research and consultation with northerners. **Northern Alberta into the '90s** served as a key statement from Council identifying some of the development priorities of the north for the next decade.

Council rounded out its busy year with public meetings in six northern communities. As well, three administrative meetings were held during the fiscal year, and three new members were appointed to replace retiring councillors.

Northern Alberta Development Council

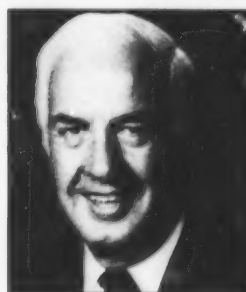
1991-92



BOB ELLIOTT, MLA
CHAIR
BEAVERLODGE



Gilbert Balderston
DEPUTY CHAIR
SEXSMITH



HON. AL "BOOMER" ADAIR
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT
PEACE RIVER



Saran Ahluwalia
Cold Lake



Pearl Calahasen, MLA
Grouard



Earl Dionne
Fort McMurray



Harold Junc
Swan Hills



Larry Langager
St. Paul



Jack Newman
Fort Vermilion

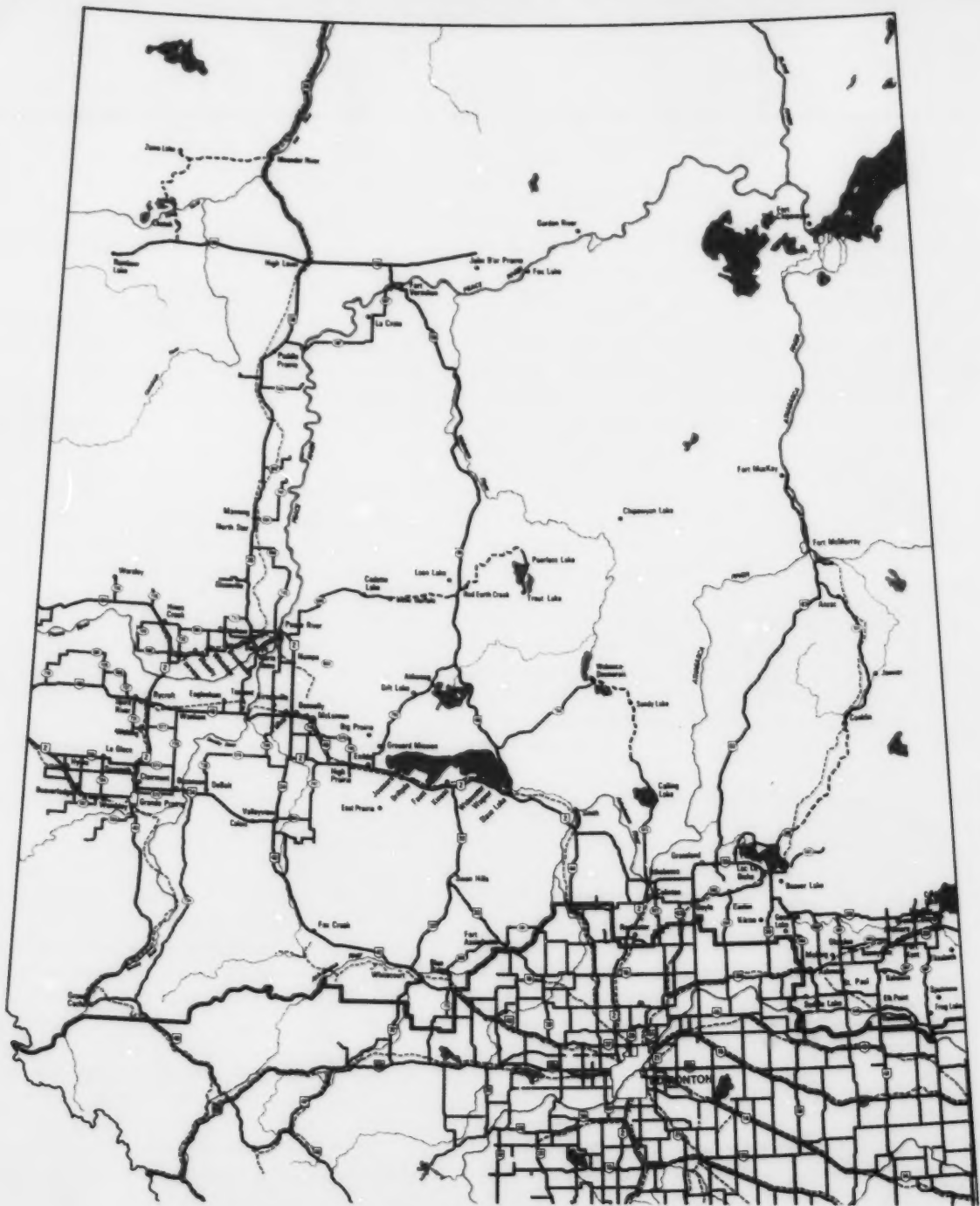


Marlin Sexauer
Whitecourt



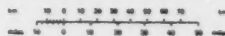
Daria Wallsten
Slave Lake





NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA

COMMUNITIES WITH POPULATION OVER 75 (1961 CANADA CENSUS)



PRIMARY HIGHWAY
 SECONDARY ROAD
 L.O.C. ROAD
 RAILWAY

PRODUCED BY PROVINCIAL MAPPING SECTION, LAND INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION © 1969

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The Northern Alberta Development Council was initially created in 1963 as a five-member advisory body to the provincial government. It was enlarged in 1973 to a membership of 10 and currently consists of eight private citizens appointed on the basis of public nominations and two elected members of the Legislative Assembly.

Through its own Act, the Northern Alberta Development Council is charged with the responsibility to "investigate, monitor, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta, and to advise the government thereon." The Act makes specific reference to social and economic development, the development of communities and service delivery, and the development of government services and programs.

The Council, at present, has an MLA Chairman and reports to the Executive Council through the minister responsible for northern development.

The Council's primary role is to provide government with a northern point-of-view on a wide range of issues, supplementing and complementing the perspectives of northern MLAs. A major objective of Council since 1973 has been to increase public participation in the planning and design of delivery systems for various government services in northern Alberta.

The general purposes that Council wishes to promote are:

- to enhance economic growth and educational opportunities within northern Alberta in order to encourage young people to stay
- to improve the viability of traditional northern small town and rural life
- to support the desires and aspirations of all residents in northern Alberta for a fair share in the wealth and potential of the area
- to support the desires of various cultural and ethnic groups within northern Alberta for maintenance of their distinctive heritage

Through regularly scheduled public meetings and sponsorship of major conferences and seminars, the Council serves as a forum to which residents can express their ideas and concerns regarding development of the north. In addition to receiving briefs at public meetings, the Council can initiate research into particular opportunities or needs, and often pursues, on behalf of northern residents, efforts toward the development of new programs or coordination of the existing service delivery.

The information service provided through the response to briefs received from the public results in the initiation of most Council activities. Nearly 60 percent of the briefs presented to the Northern Alberta Development Council since 1973 have resulted in positive responses.

The Northern Alberta Development Council considered many issues in the year under review including sub-basin water management, community-based policing, transportation and infrastructure development, tourism marketing, education, training, medical and professional recruitment, resource and small business development, municipal and local government concerns, recreation, long-term health care, native employment, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health, community rapid growth planning, student finances, manufacturing research and development, recycling, new forestry projects, fisheries management, electric energy, and municipal water and sewers.

The Northern Alberta Development Council and the five northern tourism zones co-sponsored a seminar called Tourism North 91, held May, 1991 in Slave Lake. The seminar attracted industry, zone, and government delegates to discuss the challenges and opportunities involved in marketing northern tourism. The seminar featured industry experts and extensive delegate input over the two days of discussion. Delegates concluded that the north should seek ways to better market its tourism products on a regional basis.

The Northern Alberta Development Council published a position paper called **Northern Alberta into the '90s** in August 1991. The paper was developed in response to a request from the Minister, Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair, to have Council describe key development priorities in the 1990s and to foster increased awareness of the needs and concerns of northerners. Topics covered in the position paper include a Council development philosophy, roles and responsibilities related to northern development, priorities of northern people and communities, environmental protection and enhancement, the northern economy, and northern infrastructure.

In addition to **Northern Alberta into the '90s** the Council prepared two other position papers for consideration by government. These included reviews and recommendations on the Family and Community Support Services program, and the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund.

The Northern Alberta Development Council serves as a facilitator and catalyst, assisting the line departments of government responsible for the implementation of changes and service improvements. The Council's public participation role over the years has provided an enhanced two-way flow of information, resulting in marked improvements for all northern Albertans.

NEW COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

In late 1991, through public advertisements in northern newspapers, nominations were solicited from northern community groups and organizations for nominees to replace retiring public members of the Council.

In 1992, the provincial cabinet, through the Minister responsible for Northern Alberta, the Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair, appointed three new members to the Northern Alberta Development Council. The membership of 1992/93 includes:

Bob Elliott, MLA, Grande Prairie, Chairman
Daria Wallsten, Slave Lake, Deputy-Chair
Saran Ahluwalia, Cold Lake
Pearl Calahasen, MLA Lesser Slave Lake
Diana Knight, Valleyview
Larry Langager, St. Paul
Don Lussier, Athabasca
Jack Newman, Fort Vermilion
Marlin Sexauer, Whitecourt
Gwen Tegart, Fairview

Northern Alberta Development Council Activities

PUBLIC MEETINGS

1991-92 Public Meetings of the Northern Alberta Development Council	
Manning	April
Athabasca	June
Girouxville	August
Anzac	September
Peavine	November
Grand Centre	February

During 1991/92 the Northern Alberta Development Council held six public meetings. Three other administrative meetings took place in Peace River. Council co-sponsored the Tourism North 91 seminar in Slave Lake in May, 1991.

One hundred and seventy-nine briefs were received from groups and individuals in attendance at the public meetings. Each brief submitted was reviewed by the Council to determine a course of action and forwarded to various departments and agencies of government for consideration and comment. The departmental responses were then discussed by the Council, and a decision made as to whether or not the department's position and proposed action were appropriate. If the departmental response was felt to be inappropriate, the Council directed the Northern Development Branch to further clarify the issue through Branch-directed research, or to undertake discussions with the responsible officials in order to achieve the necessary action. At times, coordination of the efforts of a number of departments of government was required. Brief originators were advised of the progress made on each of the ideas or concerns expressed in their submissions.

The results achieved by the Council varied greatly from brief to brief. In several instances the concerns raised were either completely or partially resolved. In some cases the Council and Branch are continuing to work toward a practical solution which is acceptable to all involved. The current status of any of the briefs submitted to Council is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

BRIEFS

During the year, 43 briefs were received from Berwyn, Dixonville, Fairview, Fort Vermilion, Grimshaw, High Level, La Crete, Manning, Paddle Prairie, Peace River and Worsley in the northwest region; 18 from Anzac, Chard (Janvier), Conklin, Fort MacKay and Fort McMurray in the northeast region; 34 from Chipewyan Lake, Driftpile, Gift Lake, High Prairie, Kinuso, Red Earth Creek, Slave Lake, Smith, Swan Hills, Trout Lake, Wabasca and Whitecourt in the central region; 58 from Athabasca, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Elk Point, Grand Centre, Lac La Biche, Spathnow and St. Paul in the southeast region; and 26 from Beaverlodge, Falher, Fox Creek, Girouxville, Grande Prairie, Hythe, Jean Cote, McLennan, Rycroft, Sexsmith, Silver Valley, Spirit River, Tangent and Valleyview in the southwest region.

RESEARCH AND COORDINATION

Many of the issues brought to the attention of the Northern Alberta Development Council require intensive background work and follow-up. As a result, the Council initiated a number of research projects and efforts directed at coordinating or modifying government service delivery in various areas.

Major Council activities in 1991/92 included:

- co-sponsorship of a seminar on tourism marketing with the five northern tourism zones
- completion of the report **Inventory of Infrastructure for Northern Alberta Communities, 1990** as a source of information for a wide variety of groups
- a meeting with a vice president of Athabasca University to hear about the institution's history and future plans
- completion of the report **Profiles of Regions and Communities in Northern Alberta** which provides detailed and current information about northern municipalities

- continued support for and participation in the Health Care Connection for the recruitment of health care personnel to northern Alberta
- submission of the NADC report and recommendations to the FCSS Ministerial Advisory Panel
- provision of technical services to the Town of Peace River Human Services Council to prepare a community social plan in response to growth in the forestry sector
- follow-up meetings with Wabasca and Athabasca in response to Council's research on mental health services
- a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs to get an update on the Local Development Initiative and the rural districts concept
- publication of the NADC position paper **Northern Alberta into the '90s**
- update of the Council report **Opportunities for Health Care Professionals in Northern Alberta**
- an orientation session with Council by a board member of the newly created Natural Resources Conservation Board
- preparation of the report **Final Evaluation of the Northern Supplementary Fund for Water and Sewer**
- participation on a steering committee to examine the feasibility of an all-season road from Fort McKay to Fort Chipewyan
- a meeting with the Mackenzie Regional Planning Commission to discuss items of mutual interest
- preparation of the NADC submission and recommendations to the review of the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund
- provision of funding and technical support to the Elk Point Bicentennial Society to produce a report on regional tourism marketing
- a meeting with the coordinator of the AlPac Community Advisory Committee to hear about the local benefits plans as a result of a new forestry plant in the Athabasca-Lac La Biche area
- a meeting with the Premier and the Priorities Finance and Coordination Committee
- a proposal to support sub-basin water management in northern Alberta (co-sponsored with Alberta Environment)
- initiation of a major public review and research exercise on policing services in northern Alberta
- continued participation in and coordination of activities related to the "Peace Arch Project" which seeks to generate employment and business benefits from the oil and gas industry in remote communities
- participation on the Forest Industry Training Interdepartmental Committee
- continued involvement on the Fort McKay Interface Committee
- continued sponsorship of the Student Bursary Program
- continued production of **Alberta North** magazine for children

INVENTORY OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NORTHERN COMMUNITIES, 1990

During the year, Council produced a basic information package on northern Alberta. This involved an update of the widely used **Inventory of Infrastructure for Northern Communities** previously compiled by the Council in 1977, 1980 and 1985. The report serves residents of northern Alberta and those with programming responsibilities in the north as a reference compendium of current information on facilities, demographics and essential services. The list of communities has been expanded to include hamlets with populations under 75 residents.

The document outlines services and facilities on a community-by-community basis. Each separate community page begins with background data, municipal status and current population. Information is organized in the categories of:

- water
- sewer
- waste disposal
- utilities
- communications
- transportation
- health services
- education
- recreation
- public housing
- police protection
- fire protection
- local government and resident government offices

Information on telephone services has been dropped from the **Inventory**. All of northern Alberta now has private line service.

Inventory information was collected in three stages. First, a questionnaire designed to collect up-to-date information on services in each community was sent out to administrators of municipalities, counties, municipal districts, improvement districts, Metis settlements and Indian bands. Survey data were then compared with information available from federal and provincial government departments. Any deficiencies or inconsistencies were then checked by follow-up telephone conversations with agencies or organizations with local knowledge. Data contained in the **Inventory** are believed to be the most current available at the time of verification. Because of the rapid change that characterizes the north, users are advised to augment information in the **Inventory** from other sources.

The **Inventory** includes 152 northern communities in the Northern Alberta Development council region: two cities, 26 towns, 14 villages and 82 hamlets, 20 Indian bands and eight Metis settlements. The largest centres are Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Whitecourt, Bonnyville, St. Paul, Slave Lake and Grande Cache. Only two communities had no all-weather road access. Sixty-eight had sched-

uled bus service. There are 29 paved and lighted airstrips.

Local hospitals are located in 24 of the communities. Nine communities have nursing homes, 17 have seniors' lodges. Twenty-six communities have resident police detachments, and 99 maintain a resident fire brigade. Thirty communities have weekly newspapers and two have daily papers. There are 10 radio stations based in the region.

Copies of the printed **Inventory** are available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

PROFILES OF REGIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) first produced profiles for northern Alberta communities in 1983. This publication was revised and updated in this fiscal year. The purpose of the two volumes of **Profiles** is to provide detailed information about the cities, towns, villages, hamlets, rural municipalities, Metis settlements, and Indian reserves located within the Northern Alberta Development Council area. The information describes the demographic profile, the economic base, and the facilities and services available in each community.

Approach to Data Gathering and Profile Development

The approach used to collect data for each community involved a combination of primary and secondary research. The primary research component required personal contact with each community. Data from secondary sources were used for initial information or verification of primary data.

Content

The **Profiles** include 152 northern communities in the Northern Alberta Development Council region: two cities, 26 towns, 14 villages and 82 hamlets, 20 Indian bands and eight Metis settlements. The largest centres are Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Whitecourt, Bonnyville, St. Paul, Slave Lake and Grande Cache.

The profiles of hamlets with less than 75 residents are brief summaries of the community demographics, facilities and services.

The profiles of larger communities begin with a map of the community, background data, municipal status and local history. Changes in population since 1961, age and sex profiles of residents are indicated.

Economic indicators are summarized including:

- labour force characteristics
- development activity:
 - building permit data
 - supply of vacant land for residential purposes
 - vacant land for industrial use
 - new developments – approved capital projects

The following information is also provided:

- recreation and tourism facilities
- schools and post secondary facilities
- libraries
- hospitals
- nursing homes
- health care services
- police and fire protection services
- government offices
- financial services
- newspapers, radio stations, television channels
- highway access
- freight, bus and air services
- utilities

Copies of **Profiles** are available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

SUBMISSION TO THE ALBERTA HERITAGE SCHOLARSHIP FUND REVIEW

The NADC believes very strongly in the importance of post secondary education to northerners. Since 1973, Council has also conducted a number of studies and convened workshops and seminars on a number of topics related to post secondary education.

In this fiscal year the Council prepared a submission to the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund review

process. The purpose of this submission is to assist the Students Finance Board and the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund to develop a more effective approach to meeting the needs of northern students.

The objectives of the submission are to:

- i. Apprise the Students Finance Board of the NADC's view of the impacts the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund has had on northern Alberta;
- ii. Make suggestions to the Students Finance Board on future directions for the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund, including new initiatives which may serve to meet the unique needs of northern Alberta students.

Information to support this submission was gathered from the following sources:

- briefs received by the NADC regarding the education concerns of northern residents
- research reports prepared by NADC on education and related matters
- data on AHSF activity in northern Alberta
- telephone interviews with selected northern Albertans to obtain views and opinions on AHSF

Principal Findings

- There is a strong linkage between advanced education and employment. Programs under AHSF play an important part in meeting the employment needs of northern residents and organizations.
- Approximately 8-9% of the Rutherford scholarships and 5-6% of the McKinney scholarships were awarded to northern Alberta students during the 88/89, 89/90, and 90/91 school years. This is of concern considering that 13% of the province's population who are in secondary and post secondary schools are from the north.
- Northern students do not appear to have participated in AHSF to the same extent as their peers elsewhere in the province.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Council recommends that the Students Finance Board consider the following guiding principles in making changes to AHSE:
 - Awards should be geared to employment.
 - Financial assistance should be directed where it will materially increase the probability of the individual pursuing, continuing and/or finishing post secondary training.
 - Awareness of the program must be sufficiently high to encourage students to pursue post-secondary training.
- Council recommends that the future scholarship program modify its objectives to encourage students in the professions which are in high demand and are difficult to recruit in northern Alberta.
- Council recommends that the objectives of the future scholarship program be modified so access by disadvantaged youth and mature students (particularly from remote communities) can be improved.
- Council recommends that the future scholarship program improve access to program information through public communications.
- Council recommends that the Students Finance Board consider a bursary-like vehicle which would complement the scholarship fund and the Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary.
- As an alternative, Council recommends that the Students Finance Board allocate a significant funding contribution towards a proposed Northern Alberta Student Bursary Foundation.

SUBMISSION TO THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES MINISTERIAL ADVISORY PANEL

Council prepared a submission to the panel in support of Family and Community Support Services programming in northern Alberta. In preparation for a presentation, the NADC reviewed the briefs it has received relating to social concerns, compiled information on FCSS programs in northern Alberta, and

interviewed key northerners. Community based preventive social programs are of vital importance to northern Albertans and because of unique characteristics, northern communities benefit from the responsiveness of FCSS to local needs.

The objectives of the position paper are to:

- i. Apprise the FCSS Ministerial Advisory Panel of the NADC's view of the impacts FCSS has had in northern Alberta;
- ii. Make suggestions to the FCSS Ministerial Advisory Panel on future directions for FCSS.

Information for the submission was gathered from several sources:

- briefs received by NADC regarding social services concerns
- reports researched and prepared by NADC on relevant social issues
- data on FCSS programs and projects in the NADC area provided by the FCSS program of Family and Social Services, and the FCSS Association
- telephone interviews with selected northern Albertans to obtain an overview of current needs and opinions on FCSS

Principal Findings

- 34% of briefs received by the NADC were related to human services issues.
- 68% of social services briefs were concerned with funding.
- Previous NADC reports have shown:
 - Preventive programs are an important element in the continuum of human services, and can help to reduce the need for other services.
 - There must be community input to ensure services are relevant to local needs.
 - Problems of access and gaps in services are more pronounced as community size decreases, and are particularly acute in smaller isolated communities.

- Provincial social agencies alone are not able to meet the needs of northern residents, due to a lack of resources and staff shortages.
 - There must be coordination at the local level between agencies and communities.
 - There must be provincial coordination to avoid gaps and overlaps in services.
- There are 43 municipal jurisdictions in the NADC area in an FCSS agreement with the province, serving a population of 254,000 (90% of the population within the NADC boundary).
 - There are six northern local authorities on the FCSS program waiting list.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Both Council and municipalities participating in the FCSS program acknowledge the need for preventive social services programming.
- The NADC believes that local input to planning, development and delivery of services is important for effective programs.
- A variety of considerations affect the funding and successful development of community-based preventive social programs.
- In communities where other services may be limited there can be a tendency to place increased expectations on FCSS.
- In reviewing mental health issues in northern Alberta, Council identified preventive and coordinating services as continuing needs.
- A clearer definition of the scope of preventive services could limit unfair expectations of local FCSS programs. A review of provincial services for families could further clarify the role of FCSS in relation to other provincial services.

TOURISM NORTH 91 SEMINAR

The tourism sector's importance to the economy of northern Alberta is reflected in briefs received by the NADC. The five northern Alberta tourism zones approached the NADC to assist them in clarifying the northern tourism image and in improving the com-

petitiveness of northern operators and promoters. The result was the Tourism North 91 seminar, held May 14-15, 1991 in Slave Lake. One third of the 105 seminar delegates were operators, half represented tourism zones or other associations, and the remainder were government staff.

One goal of Tourism North 91 was to seek delegate input on the development of the northern tourism industry. The seminar also served to inform and educate delegates.

The seminar reviewed:

- tourism market trends and needs
- images and themes of northern Alberta tourism opportunities
- means for a regional cooperative marketing effort
- ideas on how to develop and market tourism packages

Management consultants from Peat Marwick Stevenson and Kellogg gave an overview of market trends and image development. Delegates attended one of three concurrent workshops: Public and Private Sources of Funding and Investment, Alberta Best Program, or Marketing Planning Skills Program. A panel presentation by a representative from Alberta Tourism and two tourism promoters provided an informative session on:

- how to market and package your product
- what a tour operator looks for in evaluating opportunities
- how to take advantage of tour packages

Discussion groups reviewed the tourism assets and images of northern Alberta. Delegates discussed which tourism products or packages could be developed and which had the greatest potential. They identified practical measures to develop the northern tourism industry.

Delegate Conclusions

The delegates concluded that no dominant tourism theme applies to all of northern Alberta; however, three resources were ranked as having the highest potential for development: natural/wilderness, cultural/historical and recreation. To take maxi-

mum advantage of existing opportunities, operators and promoters felt they needed to learn who their target markets were, which products to offer, and how to promote attractions. A wide variety of promising packages were identified: bird and other wildlife viewing, guiding/outfitting/fishing, culture and historical sites, and industrial tours.

Delegate Recommendations

- Operators, tourism associations and communities should work together to improve communication, hold special events, advertise more effectively and develop products and tourism packages.
- The provincial government and the tourism industry should recognize the importance of the northern tourism resource base—clean air, water and land, and northern wilderness and history.
- Create a mechanism to collectively develop and promote northern tourism.

NORTHERN ALBERTA INTO THE '90S

In October 1991, the NADC released a position paper on northern development entitled **Northern Alberta into the '90s**. Its purpose was two-fold:

- to describe some of the key development priorities of the north as we enter the 1990s
- to foster increased awareness of the needs and concerns of northerners

The position paper is a result of Council's ongoing efforts to consult northerners on issues affecting the region. The development priorities contained in the paper were based on several sources of information:

- recent research reports, program evaluations and government submissions prepared by the NADC
- a review of public briefs presented to Council at recent NADC public meetings
- recommendations stemming from a major NADC conference on northern development held in Grande Prairie in November 1990

The NADC believes that the concept of sustainable development should form the basis of development decisions in the north. Several aspects of sus-

tainable development are particularly relevant to the region. These include the need to:

- fully integrate environmental concerns into all aspects of community and economic development
- recognize the importance of public consultation and education as a basis for development policy
- manage our natural resources in a manner that promotes long-term community stability and maintains cultures and lifestyles

Central to this philosophy is Council's belief that provision of services to people and communities will remain an ongoing priority for the region.

Council Priorities

The position paper contains a description of development challenges and priorities in four general areas:

People and Community
Environment Protection and Enhancement
Northern Economy
Northern Infrastructure

Over 50 specific priorities are identified in the position paper under topics ranging from tourism and agriculture to health and social services. These priorities reflect a number of common themes, including the need for:

- greater sensitivity to the unique needs and concerns of northern Albertans and the diversity of communities within the region
- recognition of the importance of environmental protection and enhancement in guiding development decisions
- full consultation with communities on future development in the region
- improved cooperation and coordination among agencies that provide services to people and communities
- special attention to the development disparities that exist in the region
- improvements in northern infrastructure to promote economic development and improve quality of life
- economic diversification as a means of stabilizing the economic base of northern communities

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

In October 1991, the NADC published the second edition of **Opportunities for Health Care Professionals in Northern Alberta**. This document provides health care professionals with up-to-date information on career opportunities in the north. The first edition, published in 1989, proved to be highly popular with students and professionals considering a career in northern Alberta.

Like its predecessor, the 1991 edition contains essential information on a wide variety of topics important to health care professionals. This includes:

- a photographic and descriptive overview of the region focusing on the north's economy, infrastructure and community services
- a review of current career and practise opportunities in the north
- a profile, by community, describing each of the region's major health care facilities and employers

Several changes were made to the 1991 edition to improve its effectiveness as a recruiting aid. These include:

- expanding the community profiles section to include more information on community life and local recreational opportunities
- adding a list for each community of health and social services employers other than hospitals and health units
- providing a description of employment incentive programs and benefits available for people considering a career in the north
- developing a contact directory of associations and government departments capable of providing further information on career opportunities in the north

- providing five-year projections on regional requirements for health care professionals in 25 different disciplines

The publication of **Opportunities for Health Care Professionals** reflects Council's ongoing commitment to assist northern communities in their recruiting efforts. Attracting and retaining highly-qualified professionals continues to be a development priority for the region.

STUDENT BURSARY PROGRAM

Created in 1974, the Northern Alberta Development Council Student Bursary Program is designed to facilitate the training of a technical and professional work force. Such a work force is in demand in northern areas of the province.

Students assisted through the program are obligated to work in northern Alberta, preferably in rural locations, for at least one year for each year of bursary support received.

The bursary program is administered by the Students Finance Board. A selection committee made up of four members of the Northern Alberta Development Council and one representative each from the Metis Nation of Alberta, the Students Finance Board, and Alberta Career Development and Employment, is responsible for establishing guidelines and selecting candidates.

Using the selection criteria, assistance was offered to 151 applicants for total funding of \$469,000 in the 1991/92 fiscal year. Since the 1974 inception of the program, 2,497 bursaries have been awarded. These bursaries attracted professional graduates into the health care system, education, social services, agriculture, law, business, and engineering. Most bursary graduates have returned to the north, and at least 50% have remained there after completing their service obligation.

Through a joint initiative of Career Development and Employment and the Northern Development Branch, the Professional Manpower Recruitment Project has helped bursary graduates contact northern employers.

MEDICAL ELECTIVE PROJECT

In September of 1984, the Northern Alberta Development Council initiated a Medical Elective Project as a follow-up to the Council's very successful Medical Recruitment Interchanges. The interchanges brought northern community representatives together with medical students from the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

The Medical Elective Project provides small grants to students to defray their travel and accommodation costs while taking course electives in northern Alberta. The intent is to encourage medical doctors to locate in northern Alberta upon graduation by giving them a sample of life in the north.

In 1988, the project was expanded to include professionals from the University of Alberta's Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine under the title of the Medical Professional Exposure Project.

Since the project began, 122 medical students, 10 occupational therapists, three speech therapists, and 50 physiotherapists have been given the opportunity to experience rural practice as part of their undergraduate training.

Northern Development Branch

The purpose of the Northern Development Branch is to share in developing and maintaining the kind of socio-economic environment that will give maximum opportunity to northern Albertans to grow and prosper.

To achieve its purpose, the Branch provides all the administrative and technical support required by the Northern Alberta Development Council. The Branch also works toward achieving specific socio-economic improvements in the area.

The Branch seeks to advance the development of human and natural resources in northern Alberta, as well as to aid in community development goals such as local decision-making and planning. It delves into a wide variety of issues as a result of briefs received by the Northern Alberta Development Council. Examples include agriculture, resource development, business development, tourism, manpower training, community and regional infrastructure, education, social services, recreation, communications and transportation.

The **Research and Coordination Section** of the Branch provides research on community and regional needs in the north, program evaluations and analysis, and policy development as requested by the Northern Alberta Development Council. It also monitors and coordinates program delivery and special enrichment projects for the north.

Although not directly involved in Council activities, the **Agreement Administration Section** provides information to the members as required. The purpose of this Section is to implement the Canada/Alberta Northern Development Subsidiary Agreement over the 1986-92 time frame and through its windup phase. This involves assessing applications and undertaking the necessary financial disbursement and control procedures.

The **Council Administration Section** provides technical and logistical support to the chairman and to individual Council members for the monthly meetings. It also offers special project support for Council and Branch initiatives.

In support of Council's public participation role, section staff members visit community leaders prior to public meetings to prepare advance briefing mate-

rial for Council members. Contact is made with town councils, chambers of commerce and other interested community members to discuss concerns related to the development of business, industry and government services in their region. Staff members are available at any time to answer questions from the public about the brief presentation process. Usually six public Council meetings are held in different communities across northern Alberta each year.

Section staff are responsible for the preliminary investigation of issues presented either at public meetings or directly to the chairman between meetings.

In its role as a coordinator and facilitator and particularly as supplier of technical support to the Northern Alberta Development Council, the Branch maintains a vital communication link between northern people and government.

The **Council Administration Section** was also responsible for the administration of the Professional Recruitment Project. The objective of this project, jointly supported by the Canada/Alberta Northern Development Subsidiary Agreement and Alberta Career Development and Employment, was to develop some viable strategies for the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce in northern Alberta. The project ended on March 31, 1992. One strategy examined the potential of a private non-profit foundation formed by government and industry to provide incentives so students might attend post-secondary institutions. The concept of a Northern Bursary Foundation will be pursued as a project under the Council Administration Section.